

CHAPTER 31

Luqmân

(REVEALED AT MAKKAH: 4 *sections*; 34 *verses*)

The name of this chapter is taken from that of the sage to whose story it refers. *Luqmân* was an Ethiopian, and his mention here testifies to the breadth of the fundamental principles of Islâm alluded to in the last chapter. The aim of this chapter is, like its sister chapters, to ensure the success of believers. It belongs, like its two predecessors, to the middle Makkan period.

The first section asserts in unmistakable terms the success of the Muslims; the second refers to the advice of Luqmân to his son, which was now meant for the Muslims; the third speaks of the greatness of Divine power, which could bring about such an impossible thing as the triumph of the Muslims over their enemies; and the fourth foretells the doom of the mighty opponents.

SECTION 1: **Believers will be successful**

In the name of Allâh, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 *alif lâm mîm*

2 These are the verses of the Book of Wisdom —

3 A guidance and a mercy for the doers of good,

4 Who keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate and who are certain of the Hereafter.

5 These are on a guidance from their *Rabb*, and these are they who are successful.

6 And of human beings is he who takes instead frivolous discourse to lead astray from Allâh's path without knowledge, and to make it a mockery. For such is an abasing chastisement.^a

7 And when Our messages are recited to him, he turns back proudly, as if he had not heard them, as if there were deafness in his ears; so announce to him a painful chastisement.

8 Those who believe and do good, for them are Gardens of bliss,

9 To abide therein. A promise of Allâh in truth! And He is the Mighty, the Wise.

10 He created the *samâwât* without pillars that you see, and cast mountains on the earth lest it should be convulsed with you,^a and He spread on it animals of every kind. And We send down water from the clouds, then cause to grow therein of every noble kind.

6a. It is a mistake to think that a particular person is meant here. The concluding words of the verse show clearly that the statement is general and applies to all those who take the Qur'ân for a mockery.

10a. See 16:15a.

11 This is Allâh's creation; now show Me that which those besides Him have created. Nay, the unjust are in manifest error.

SECTION 2: Luqmân's Advice to his Son

12 And certainly We gave Luqmân wisdom,^a saying: Give thanks to Allâh. And whoever is thankful, is thankful for his or her *nafs*; and whoever denies, then surely Allâh is Self-Sufficient, Praised.

13 And when Luqmân said to his son, while he admonished him: O my son, ascribe no partner to Allâh. Surely ascribing partners (to Him) is a grievous iniquity.

14 And We have enjoined on human beings concerning his or her parents — his or her mother bears him or her with fainting upon fainting and his weaning takes two years — saying: Give thanks to Me and to your parents. To Me is the eventual coming.^a

15 And if they strive with thee to make you associate with Me that of which you have no knowledge, obey them not, and keep kindly company with them in this world,^a and follow the way of him who turns to Me; then to Me is your return, then I shall inform you of what you did.

12a. From what is stated of him; Luqmân seems to have been an Ethiopian. It is very probable that the Greek "Asop" is a corruption of "Ethiopian" and is identical with Luqmân. The Qur'ân accepts many prophets besides those mentioned in the Holy man-made Bible.

14a. Verses 14 and 15 are parenthetical, enjoining the duty of obedience to parents, because it is a parent who is advising his son.

15a. Notwithstanding the great stress that the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân lays here and elsewhere on the duty of obedience to parents, it also warns against attaching undue importance to that duty when the same clashes with a still higher duty, viz., one's duty to one's Maker. In fact any duty, however great, must be sacrificed before a higher duty, and one's duty to one's Maker is the highest of all duties.

16 O my son, even if it be the weight of a grain of mustard-seed, even though it be in a rock, or in the heaven or in the earth, Allâh will bring it forth. Surely Allâh is Knower of subtilities, Aware.

17 O my son, keep up prayer and enjoin good and forbid evil, and bear patiently that which befalls you. Surely this is an affair of great resolution.

18 And turn not thy face away from people in contempt, nor go about in the land exultingly. Surely Allâh loves not any self-conceited boaster.

19 And pursue the right course in your going about and lower your voice. Surely the most hateful of voices is braying of asses.^a

SECTION 3: Greatness of Divine Power

20 See you not that Allâh has made subservient to you whatever is in the *samâwât* and whatever is in the earth, and granted to you His favours complete outwardly and inwardly? And among human beings is he who disputes concerning Allâh without knowledge or guidance or a Book giving light.^a

19a. Humility and meekness were taught by every prophet. Even an Ethiopian preached the meekness and humility which was preached by 'Îsâ.

20a. The words are meant as well for the Muslims. So long as they adhered to the *Book giving light* they continued to advance in the world, and they will again lead the world when they place the *Book giving light* in the forefront.

21 And when it is said to them, Follow that which Allâh has revealed, they say: Nay, we follow that wherein we found our fathers. What! Though the *shaitân* calls them to the chastisement of the burning Fire!

22 And whoever submits himself to Allâh and does good (to others), he indeed takes hold of the firmest handle. And Allâh's is the end of affairs.

23 And whoever disbelieves let not his disbelief grieve you. To Us is their return, then We shall inform them of what they did. Surely Allâh is Knower of what they did. Surely Allâh is Knower of what is in the breasts.

24 We give them to enjoy a little, then We shall drive them to a severe chastisement.

25 And if you ask them who created the *samâwât* and the earth? They will say: Allâh. Say: Praise be to Allâh! Nay, most of them know not.

26 To Allâh belongs whatever is in the *samâwât* and the earth. Surely Allâh is the Self-Sufficient, the Praised.

27 And if all the trees in the earth were pens, and the sea with seven more seas added to it (were ink), the words of Allâh would not be exhausted. Surely Allâh is Mighty, Wise.^a

27a. *‘Abd Allâh ibn ‘Abbâs* (Companion) thinks this verse and the two that follow belong to Madînan revelation, but there is no indication in the text, nor any evidence, to show that they were not revealed at Makkah. A similar statement is contained in another early Makkan revelation; see 18:109. It is noteworthy that a human being who himself could not use the pen and who lived in a country where pen and ink were at any rate scarce, expresses such an idea of the abundance of pens and ink. While containing a prophetic allusion to the abundant use of pen and ink in the world, the words are expressive of the unimaginable vastness of the Creation of Allâh, for everything created is a word of Allâh in the sense that it is created by Divine commandment.

28 Your creation or your raising is only like a single *nafs*. Surely Allâh is Hearing, Seeing.

29 See you not that Allâh makes the night to enter into the day, and He makes the day to enter into the night, and He has made the sun and the moon subservient (to you) — each pursues its course till an appointed time — and that Allâh is Aware of what you do?

30 This is because Allâh is the Truth, and that which they call upon besides Him is falsehood, and that Allâh is the High, the Great.

SECTION 4: The Doom comes

31 See you not that the ships glide on the sea by Allâh's grace, that He may show you of His signs? Surely there are signs in this for every patient endurer, grateful one.^a

32 And when a wave like awnings covers them, they call upon Allâh, being sincere to Him in obedience. But when He brings them safe to land, some of them follow the middle course. And none denies Our signs but every perfidious, ungrateful one.

33 O people keep your duty to your *Rabb* and dread the day when no father can avail his son in aught, nor will the child avail his father. Surely the promise of Allâh is true, so let not this world's life deceive you, nor let the arch-deceiver deceive you about Allâh.^a

31a. The *signs for the patient endurer and the grateful one* no doubt contain a hint to the suffering but grateful Muslims, and to their being made a great nation.

33a. *Gharûr*, which literally means *the great deceiver*, stands for the *shaitân*.

34 Surely Allâh is He with Whom is the knowledge of the Hour, and He sends down the rain, and He knows what is in the wombs. And no one knows what he will earn on the morrow. And no one knows in what land he will die. Surely Allâh is Knowing, Aware.^a

34a. By *the Hour* is meant *the hour* of the fulfilment of prophecy and of the downfall of the opponents, as well as the Resurrection. The wonderful disclosure of knowledge relating to the future could not be made by a mere mortal, who cannot foretell the ordinary events of life happening before his eyes day and night. But there may also be a deeper reference to the transformation that was to be brought about in Arabia: the sending down of rain signifying the quickening of the spiritually dead; those that were in the wombs were ordained to be Muslims; the opponents of today would prove the supporters of tomorrow; and those who turned the Muslims out of their houses would themselves meet death, when away from their habitations, even as they did when they attacked Madînah to crush the Muslims.